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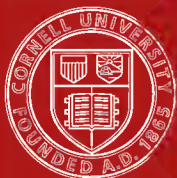
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CAUSE AND EFFECT
IN
HISTORY.

A Paper read before the "Literary and Scientific Society"
of Hamilton, Ohio.

BY
L. R. KLEMM, Ph. D.
Supt. of Public Schools.



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CAUSE AND EFFECT IN HISTORY.

A PAPER

READ BEFORE THE "HAMILTON LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY"

By L. R. KLEMM, Ph. D.

SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Not only in the history of our earth's formation, but in the history of man, of nations as well, has the "cataclysm-theory" ceased to be tenable. Modern physical science no longer accepts the statement, that worlds and organisms are completely destroyed at certain crises, and continents and oceans arranged in a different order to form an entirely new creation. And like geology, scientific history, that is, historical investigation, searches among all transmitted facts for cause and effect. Only contemporaries are surprised.

By succeeding generations cause and effect are seen to be the scheme planned long in advance, the operation of prepared expedients and mechanical forces. Such a view behind the scenes of the world's theatre is often painful, and yet helpful to the mind. For wounds inflicted by truth do not cause loss in vital energy, but great gain. Indeed, it is only as we assure ourselves of the true nature of the forces at work in universal history, that we can reconcile ourselves with the experience that the result often falls far behind justifiable expectations,—that the advantage of one individual or nation is the detriment to another,—that without sacrifice no progress is possible.

The causes of the downfall of the Roman republic form the subject which I desire to present to day. In this connection, the thought occurred to me to point out, at especially notable periods in this historical sketch, the resemblances existing in our government of to-day, and to draw parallels, but this seemed scarcely appropriate for an assembly like the present. He must be stricken with blindness, who could not discern the likeness between the dangers affecting the government in Rome and in America. Whoever will have the goodness to follow me attentively, will be tempted, at several prominent points, to exchange the names of American statesmen for Roman ones, so similar, so identical, are the conditions in the Union with those of Rome 2000 years ago.

Some one may wish to suggest that among the nations mentioned in history there may be, at least one, better suited than the Roman, to the consideration given in this place. The history of the Roman people, I admit, is by no means the one, which most charms the human mind. In this respect it is far surpassed by the Greek, particularly the Attic. I have, however, chosen the Roman, because it is in several points similar to the history of the United States, though in others, to be sure, as unlike as possible. Furthermore, it is of peculiar value to us as citizens of the United States, since no other historical epoch is so well fitted to serve as a store-house of fruitful teaching for the circumstances by which we are surrounded. Yet that alone is not the cause of my selecting the Roman history. It is, that, of all histories, this one is the most instructive for knowledge of the laws in accordance with which states rise, flourish and decline. In harmony with the serious, prudent character of its people, it presents more clearly than does any other, a gradual, progressive, self-unfolding development of all governmental relations. Not easily could a state be found, in which both, the detail of outward changes and the unfolding of the inner national life have proceeded so regularly. Outwardly and inwardly, in the prosperity and in the decay of the nation, a sudden change is scarcely visible.

This peculiarity is especially noticeable in the *external* history. From what slender, almost imperceptible beginnings rose the Roman power! The starting point of that mighty empire was a city in a district which would have offered scarcely space enough for our little city. This gradual, uninterrupted growth was by no means the sequence of a sudden illumination of political good fortune, but nothing more and nothing less than discriminating judgment, unusual persistence and a peculiar aptitude for war were the causes that the city subdued, first, the surrounding regions, then all Italy, and that the Roman power finally reached out farther with resistless certainty until the boundaries of the empire included nearly all of the then known world. The largest, fairest portions of the earth's surface, as then explored, were either Roman provinces or tributary states.

And just as gradually did the life of the tree decline, so that its fall at last could occur almost without noise.

But still more than the external, do the *internal* relations afford the sight of a slow, one might say thoughtful, advance. Nowhere else may be traced so clearly the progress of a national growth in nature's own unhurried manner. Until the year 509 B. C., that is, for nearly 250 years, Rome was a monarchy. It is true, by the unanimous

report of antiquity, this early monarchy was overthrown suddenly and with violence, but on closer inspection, we see, that it no longer had foundation in popular approval. The republican form of government, was prepared long before, as plainly told by early writers, Livy in particular. Then followed the conflict of ranks and classes. Fully two hundred years elapsed from the beginning of the contest, before the common people, wresting one immunity after another from the aristocracy, attained to the full possession of political rights, and the organization of the government thereby reached its highest consummation.

In precisely similar manner as the progress, is the ruin of the republican constitution finally brought about, without shock or violent act. No, the splendid Roman republic, after it has conquered the globe, is thoroughly unsettled in a long, quiet struggle by various deadly conditions, and the way for its fall thereby so imperceptibly prepared that the appearance in conclusion of the "One-Man-Power," of Caesarism, is made to appear inevitable necessity. Even the thought of a return to the old republican form can no more arise.

Since thus in the course of Rome's history, violent transitions occur very seldom, but instead, the germs of new forms may be traced in undisturbed growth through long periods, the study of this history offers opportunity for comparison, as does that of no other people. But in all Roman history, no other period offers so much instruction as the one which witnessed the downfall of its republican government.

Gentlemen! When a free state whose citizens have conquered the world by their wonderful strength, adapts itself with such composure to a monarchy that the latter is never again seriously opposed, the constitutional change must indeed be accounted for by causes of the most unanswerable character. The merely incidental conquest by a despot could in no way explain it. Striking evidence is found, how little a monarchy thus established may count upon continuance, among the numberless examples of Greek despots who were soon compelled to yield again to the popular republican pressure. In Rome, on the contrary, liberty is by no means restored through Cæsar's assassination, but a fresh struggle for supremacy begins which does not cease, until Octavianus succeeds in establishing his authority. And from that time on, whatever opposition occurs, is directed against the person of the monarch, not against the fact of monarchy, which is conclusive proof that royal power must have had deep-reaching roots in the altered character and corresponding condition of

the people. If we now direct our attention towards those conflicts of factions, preceding and directly assisting the fall of the Republic, and compare them, according to their origin and aim, with the earlier ones between patricians and plebeians, we shall find, first of all, a very remarkable change in the national character, than which none other could be more favorable to the subversion of free government. For instance, while the earlier strifes between the nobility and the common people were almost always waged by the populace in behalf of their own well-understood interest, we now see the people set into commotion, even if under the pretence of their advantage, merely for the selfish purposes of their leaders. Thus Cæsar ranged himself, from the beginning of his career, on the side of the popular party, and sought to commend himself to it by his agrarian laws and other favors; but who does not see from the whole history of the ambitious man, that by these means he wished to make the people instrumental to his personal aims, and that they were merely the price, for which the people helped along Cæsar's ambitious schemes?

I must call your attention to another phase of the subject from which it likewise follows that the people in general had become a spiritless tool in the hands of their leaders, and that their vital interest were of no consequence to the weal or woe of the state. We notice, for instance, that during the civil wars, many a time, *one* battle decides the contest, and we can draw the conclusion, that everything depended on the person of the leader, whom they renounced at once, when the prospect of reward had vanished from his side.

But if a people, which calls itself republican, permits itself to be thus maltreated, it must fare ill with its love of liberty. The possibility is at least suggested, that it may submit to the yoke of despotism without resistance. Both things, however, the indifference of the masses to constitutional liberty, as well as the strife of party chiefs for unlimited extension of power, could have arisen only from deep moral degradation. The perversion of morality which increased in equal measure with external power, is the fundamental evil of that time, yes, it is a prominent cause of the overthrow of the republican government, though by no means the only one, as I mean to show further on.

In all historical writings, ancient and modern, mention is chiefly made of the moral depravity among the influential and powerful classes, when speaking of the deterioration of the Roman people. To me, on the contrary, it seems, as if the moral sense of the lower classes

is by far the more important and the more significant element for the dismemberment of the government.

But if we question how it comes, that the plebs during the last century of the free state became so contemptible a class, there is presented for consideration, as the peculiar evil of the state, on one side, the gradual increase in the vast class without property, the pauper element; on the other side, the vast accumulation of wealth, and especially of landed property, in the hands of the few. Between these extremes the middle class stands on poor footing, and even disappears entirely in consequence of impoverishment. But on this class depends the strength of every state, the middle class in its turn depends upon agriculture. The impoverishment of this class, however, and the decay of agriculture, by which the death-blow was given to the welfare of the small land-owners, begin during one of the most brilliant periods in Roman history, the Second Punic War (218-201 B. C.)

It was the most bitter revenge that the finally defeated Hannibal, of Carthage, could have taken on Rome at his departure from Italy, that in consequence of his victorious passage through the whole peninsula, in the year 201 B. C., he left behind him an Italy wasted and reduced beyond example. Already during the war had the small land-owners, disregarding their ruined possessions, rushed in crowds towards the city of Rome; nor could they be again removed from it, not even by force.

During the wearisome war, the burdens of debt among the small proprietors, a class already greatly enlarged, increased so much, that it was scarcely possible for them, after the close of the war, to cultivate their lands again.

Gentlemen! Some of you know from experience what consequences follow in the train of war and likewise how difficult it is, to overcome these consequences, and now remember, that the second Punic war was waged with the greatest severity in their own land for 17 years. This war resulted in a devastation of the open country such as occurred in greater degree only in the 30-years' war during the 17th century. In addition to this reflect, that what had been so ruthlessly destroyed in Italy in one year required the labor of ten years to be restored. For this reason the poor man lost courage, and we all know, that the Latin race lacked the unconquerable vitality of the Germanic race. The ground adapted to cultivation passed more and more into the hands of the wealthy few, who, through bargain, usury and craft, or even violence, dispossessed the humble proprietor, and even acquired the exclusive use of the incorporated common lands,

in many cases even secured ownership. Moreover they had their land worked by slaves; thus land ceased to give support to free citizens.

This decay of the middle class had so extended up to the year 137, that Tiberius Gracchus during a journey through Etruria found slaves at the plough in almost every case; on which account, in an effective speech to the people, he used the words: "The so-called masters of the world do not possess a clod of earth as their own property."

The city of Rome appeared the most natural place of refuge to all the ruined tribes in Italy, and of course, an excessive increase of the poorer class occurred in consequence. But even here, no respectable occupation could be found except for him, who was adapted or inclined to the military profession. Antient Rome recognized only two honorable vocations for the free-born citizen,—agriculture and war. Trade and industrial pursuits had always been foreign to the Romans. They proudly held these to be necessary evils and unworthy occupations for a free man. They rather left it to foreigners and serfs to enjoy the rich profit which manual labor and mercantile enterprises bring in, than that they should have sullied their dignity with the stain of vulgar occupations. All professional labor, even the decoration of the palaces, was performed by slaves, men and women. All the conditions mentioned taken together, formed the natural foundation, on which was formed, more quickly in Rome than in Europe of to-day, a frightfully large class of the lower order. This class, as everywhere, was driven by the very nature of the case into immorality, and became a tool to be bought with gold, and ready for anything,—a class, too, which did not shrink from revolts and revolutions, but, on the contrary, regarded these as welcome opportunities.

And there was no lack of persons to bribe the hands of this all-powerful order for enterprises of such character, for the antient lofty Roman spirit had also disappeared from the *upper* ranks of society, and in its place luxury and avarice had entered, coupled with boundless ambition. These were, in a high degree, the characteristic features of the upper classes in those days.

The old proverbial simplicity of a Cincinnatus, Curius and Fabricius could have continued only so long, as Rome had retained its simple conditions, when its wars were waged only with pastoral people, whose conquest only extended its might but did not increase wealth by enormous booty and spoils. A crisis must have intervened when contact began with the superfine, wealthy and luxurious Greeks.

The subjugation of the eastern empires entirely destroyed the last protection of the antient Roman spirit.

The poet calls it Nemesis, the Nemesis of universal history. Foolish talk! Nothing is presented in such events, but the results of given causes. The rushing together of two streams does not double, but *quadruples* the force of their waters. Let no one wonder therefore at the decay of morality in antient Rome; let him see therein nothing remarkable. It simply but plainly proves; that every nation which does not, or cannot, refrain from intimate contact with other nations, stands under the law of universal application, in other words is weakened by them. It *must* have happened, as it did happen; for with the acquisition of higher culture from others the disadvantages of that culture must also be accepted. And these disadvantages increased in geometrical progression. With the taste for greater refinement, for the art-treasures of the Greeks, the Grecian idea of living held sway, and Grecian luxury and fastidiousness entered into the homes of the Roman nobles. The first traces of this change in the national character likewise appear in the time of the second Punic war. The robbery of works of art became a habit with time. Extortion in the enemy's land increased systematically. In order to exhibit in its full force this characteristic, which had become general with time among the influential Romans, it will suffice to cite, instead of many, one conspicuous example, which has attained unenviable celebrity through Cicero's orations, I mean Verres, the governor of Sicily, who was publicly censured by Cicero in his famous "Orations against Verres" on account of his shameful oppression, and Cicero so vigorously attacked him, that he voluntarily went into exile. Cicero does not hesitate in his accusations to put into the mouths of the inhabitants of Sicily the words, "Verres has plundered all the gold and silver and treasures of the island during his administration." Now, whether that be a rhetorical exaggeration or not, the essential fact is not affected. When he reports the value of the booty at 1000 million sesterces, he seems specially to confirm the publicity of the robbery.

What more natural than that with the rapacity described, with this influx of the whole world's wealth into Rome, the most unbounded dissipation, and to us unimaginable extravagance should go hand in hand. In consequence of these things Rome became a cess-pool of vice. The scope of this discourse does not permit me to go into a closer description of the refined debaucheries. Neither is this the place to picture in detail the monstrous extravagance which began to prevail at banquets and spectacles; in dress and buildings and furniture.

Let the remark suffice that Sallust, although himself living in the midst of the depraved age, and therefore very moderate in his judgment, introduces his short recital of these evils of the time with the words, "These things would seem in the highest degree incredible to him who had not seen them with his own eyes." Indeed, one may, even without possessing a special acquaintance with the history of luxury, affirm without hesitation that never in the course of all history, had dissipation and excess reached a similar height as among the Romans of the higher ranks, for the simple reason, that at no time could the means for these have been provided so profusely. What foolishly large sums were expended by single citizens of Rome for articles of luxury, may be learned from the following facts. Cato had tapestries brought from Babylon for the cushions of his banquet-hall, which cost him 800,000 sesterces (\$30,000). The greatest extravagance, however, was reached in furniture made from the cypress-wood growing at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. The peculiarity of this wood consists in a knot in the root, which after preparation exhibits a resemblance to a panther-skin or peacock-feathers. One million sesterces (\$35,000) was paid for two such tables, owned by Gallus and Cethegus; and Cicero, although he was not rich, paid as much for one such table. Our public statesmen and senators have, the Lord be thanked! not yet carried things as far as that! Crassus is reported to have owned real-estate in the city of Rome to the amount of 170 millions of sesterces (12 million dollars).

Reverence for law disappeared; truth and faith were subjects for ridicule, perjury a daily occurrence. Marriage lost its sanctity, education was given up entirely. The youthful Romans of rank grew up amid the improprieties, crimes and outrages which their parents, yes, even the state itself, shamelessly committed. The excavated walls of Pompeii bear witness to acts which seem incredible, and which no author had the courage to chronicle. The brushes or colors of the artists proved to be vile enough for the occasion. How must such examples have taken effect on youthful dispositions, especially as the education and training of the young was commonly entrusted to slaves of Greek descent!

Let us once more hear Sallust in regard to the result of such training, "The disposition of youth, early directed towards evil, could not easily escape an inclination towards sensual pleasures; all the more eagerly was it bent in every way upon wealth and lavish expenditure." Now, if the paternal property did not suffice for the unlimited expenses, if everything had been squandered or entirely cov-

ered with debts, a longing glance was turned toward the provinces in order to extort from these the means for new prodigality. But on the other hand, it was possible to obtain these provincial appointments only through bribery.

With the mention of these competitions I have indicated the ground upon which the baseness of the upper classes and the recklessness of the populace met. And nothing is more natural than that these two extremes should meet. This reciprocal action greatly precipitated the further ruin and destruction of the government.

From the third Punic war, and already during its continuance, the occupation of official positions depended no longer upon worth and capability, but upon the amount and extension of the bribe. The destitute, suffering people regarded bribery as a regular means of livelihood. It did not stop with electoral corruption, which was done in secret, and often amounted to millions of sesterces,—no, ambition and party strife on the one hand, cowardice and depravity, sometimes sheer starvation, on the other, were of such a character, that the people made bold to present themselves to the brokers who bought, not only the votes of the populace for elections, but also engaged in advance their strong right arms for murder and strife. All too often such scenes occurred at elections. Laws proved of no avail against the general depravity and the unbounded corruption. There is no more striking proof of the hopelessness in the conditions then existing, than that Cicero himself openly protected Murena who was accused of notorious briberies. That was equivalent to a legalization of lawlessness.

But however much the diminution of free sentiment among the masses may have made easy and prepared the downfall of the republican government, they greatly err who would make this moral debasement the sole, or even the chief cause for the appearance of monarchy as a necessary sequence. That such a conclusion is too precipitate may be seen by a reference to republics, ancient and modern, in which the greatest depravity is known to have held sway. In Carthage, the republican form of government went down only with the city, and it was maintained in Venice for centuries, almost without any internal disturbance. To be sure, the so-called republics were not democratic, but from the preceding statements concerning the conduct of the lower and the upper ranks, it is sufficiently plain, that also in Rome, after the time of the Gracchi, the democratic form had really failed, if not formally. Even if the issue of elections or legislation depended upon the masses, they were subservient almost entirely

to the aims of ambitious party chiefs. Moreover, we find the positions with which the real power was associated without exception in possession of the most influential families, the so-called Optimates.

The demoralization had already gone so far eighty years before our era, that the people proper held only the humble offices. The upper official positions were passed from hand to hand among the nobles, thus strengthening their sway. Nobility of rank and birth formed an obstinate phalanx against all those who believed they might rely upon their merits.

This aristocracy might have existed amid the greatest degradation of morals, and monarchy could have been avoided, but internal dissensions were not to be stifled. Venice, for example, existed for centuries under an aristocracy. It is granted that this republic was not democratic, but it was nevertheless a republic. Had the conditions shaped themselves in Rome, as they did later in Venice, the necessity for a monarchy would not have appeared. We see from this that the great depravity and corruption were not the only causes of the downfall of the republican government among the Romans. Other causes must have been involved to result in its failure, despite its splendid past—and this, indeed, was the case.

The second effective lever for the overturning of the government was the dissimilar composition of the state as a whole, which made it impossible under a republican constitution to guard against internal collisions and disturbances. From the collisions civil wars arose as a natural sequence, and these could only end in a military despotism. No authority has more clearly stated the elements of which the Roman state was composed than Guizot. May I be permitted to quote him:

“Rome, in its origin, was a mere municipality, a corporation. In Italy, around Rome, we find nothing but cities—no country places, no villages. The country was cultivated, but not peopled. The proprietors dwelt in cities. If we follow the history of Rome we find that she founded or conquered a host of cities. It was with cities she fought, it was with cities she treated, into cities she sent colonies. In Gaul and Spain we meet with nothing but cities; the country around is marsh and forest. In the monuments left us of ancient Rome, we find great roads extending from city to city; but the thousands of little by-paths now intersecting every part of the country were unknown. Neither do we find traces of the immense number of churches, castles, country seats, and villages which were spread all over the country during the middle ages. The only bequests of Rome consist of vast monuments impressed with municipal character, destined for a numerous population crowded into a single spot. A municipal corporation like Rome might be able to conquer the world; but it was a much more difficult task to mould it into one compact body.”

The Roman state then had arisen from a municipality, for which, according to all historical experience, a republican form of government was certainly most suitable. In those times republican methods of conducting affairs were really adapted only to small countries or municipalities, for means of communication were lacking to provide the intercourse necessary to such an administration. All that is greatly altered in our times, where telegraph and steam power unite the most widely separated portions of a composite nation. As the Roman state widened by conquest, it suited the pride of the conquerors, that the newly-added portions should unite with the conquering power only in a relation of subjection. This is the most consequential mistake in the Roman policy. Pride blinded the victors, and instead of granting equal rights to the conquered districts, they reduced them to serfdom, and took away from them for all future time the opportunity to attain political equality. It is plainly to be seen that the condition of such a republic was insecure, for the people of the conquered provinces attempted to regain their independence, whenever danger threatened Rome, the head of the nation. They would have considered it an honor to take part with Rome's citizens in the destinies of the state, but they would never have accepted cheerfully a fate such as became theirs. History offers proofs in abundance of that statement. After the disastrous days at Cannæ, when Hannibal had nearly vanquished Rome, there occurred a general revolt of the confederates and dependencies. To be sure the favorable change in the war at that time returned everything in the old state of things.

But the effort of the Italian races to rise from their dependent condition was repeated later, and more vigorously; only with the difference, that they no longer wished to lead a national life separated from Rome, but to share with her in the rule of the world. Vainly did the aristocrats of Rome seek to evade this demand; the dangerous Social War threatened the destruction of Rome, and there finally remained no expedient to arrest the dissolution of the body politic except the granting of civil rights to all Italians.

The extension of civil equality to all Italians marks so important a moment in the vital history of the republic, that I cannot forbear to dwell upon it a little. They intended by this measure to renew and refresh, as it were, the debased city inhabitants by a healthful infusion from the rural population, in other words, to restore the middle class. They intended to convert the Roman city into a Roman nation. But they made a mistake, or rather half did what could be cured only by a radical reform.

In the first place it may be said with truth, that not even the slightest improvement, so hoped for and desired, may be noticed in the behavior of the Roman populace after the real incorporation of the Italians, in 81, B. C.; on the contrary, the popular assemblies and conventions were still as heretofore a play-ball in the hands of ambitious demagogues, greedy for spoils. That attempt to fit the form of a municipality to a whole country must of necessity have been a failure. Just imagine, how could the real middle class, plainly the most important element in the new body of citizens, from whose presence in the assemblies something beneficial was to be hoped,—how could this class have been able to make frequent journeys to Rome, to the neglect of their own affairs, in order to make their political rights of value there by exercising them?

What immense additions on the other hand were received by the two extremes of Rome's population, the low-born and the aristocratic! The prominent and wealthiest of the new citizens were soon driven to go the same way with the aristocratic party, that is, crowd their way to the head by unworthy means. On the other hand we see needy crowds, averse to labor, who now flow directly towards Rome, like refuse into a sewer, to obtain through bribery and lavish expense the means of a comfortable support, a life of idleness. Rome which had only 450,000 inhabitants in 70 B. C., had 4,165,000 inhabitants in 29 B. C., an increase of more than 900 per cent.

Thus the exact opposite was attained of what was intended by the new law. It was a new ferment thrown into the seething mass of the Roman populace. The question involuntarily presents itself: Why did it not occur to the Romans when civil and electoral rights were given the Italians, to introduce the representative system? This would have been the best way to ascertain the common will of the nation and they would have been able to dispense with so many legislative and popular assemblies, bringing ruin to the city. But this system remained foreign to all antiquity, at least, as far as representation of all the people included in the government was concerned. Nor could this scarcely have been otherwise.

The great oriental kingdoms from time immemorial, succumbed to despotism, as they even to this day languish under it. In the little free states of Greece, as for a long time among the Romans, the will of the controlling majority of the citizens in regard to important affairs, could be learned all too easily by personal votes or elections, so that the need of a representative system could not have made itself felt. It was not thought of later, when this need did appear, for the

reason that it was the custom to consider participation in legislation and state-management as a personal right, inseparable from the dignity of a free citizen. It certainly presents a limitation to the nature of a genuine democracy which is only to be found where every individual citizen shares, or may share, in the expression of the common will. (This thoroughly democratic method has lately, in certain places, been converted into a limited representative system in which new bills, legal decisions, and even appointments are subjected to a popular vote, as is done in Switzerland.) Nor must it be forgotten that the necessity of the representative system for Greeks and Romans appeared just at a time, when, what was best in their political constitution, had outlived its day; the political sense had almost perished among the people.

But, even if the leading heads in Rome could have made the resolution to introduce popular representation, Italy could not have congratulated itself as a republic on the stability needful for its plans and enduring peace without other comprehensive changes. It was not only too large, (too large for the scanty means of communication of that time,) but it was composed of too diverse elements, which was the especial reason, that the form of a united republic under the direction of a central power would have been more suitable.

A remedy could have been found for the Roman colossus against the increased danger of factions in its interior, namely the federal republic. This kind of free states in which the central power is restricted to the management of such affairs as must concern the whole and rise from the whole, while freest elbow-room is left to each state for the management of its own affairs, was alone able to encounter the dangers indicated, with which greater republics must universally contend. Not only have municipal confederations, like the Aeolian, the Ionian, the Doric, of ancient times, or the Hanseatic League of the middle ages, been able to maintain in this way the republican form of government, and attain great prosperity, but there are examples also in the present time of important confederations,—our American Union of States, the numerous republics in South America, nay, one even in the heart of Europe, Switzerland, which prove the successful adaptation of this form of government.

The prominent statesmen of Rome saw the need of this change, but the possibility of its execution was not obvious. For while the above-named republics of modern times have grown up naturally by the union of separate states which might have existed near each other without great rivalry, the opposite plan must have been pursued in

the Roman states. It could have been attained only by a breaking up of the firmly united national body, which would have been attended with the giving up of privileges, centuries old. But it is a fact of experience that a people will sooner give up a right secured by law, than a privilege sanctioned by time or custom. By the way of victory, conquest and triumph, and in spite of these, Rome ran to meet its ruin. The state fell sick from its own greatness.

Gentleman! The forces mentioned as contributing to the overthrow of the free government in Rome, are about all which present themselves to us in the study of Roman history. At least no new ones were added from the year 86 before Christ to the final crash. I will not go into the highly interesting struggle which the dying republic carried on against the near and nearer approaching monarchical encroachment, and we will, in conclusion only ask: How could Rome so long ward off monarchy? The cause of it is two-fold: A people, with whose manner of life and thought republican tendencies and customs have been most closely entwined for more than four centuries,—such a people can accustom themselves only very slowly to the sight of a monarch; his sudden appearance they are not able to endure. Secondly; it is natural that the nobles will not soon put up with the rule of one from their own number, to disturb them in their presumptive privileges.

How powerful were these two elements of opposition to monarchy is plainly seen in the history of that man, of whom his flatterers said, that the imperial vocation was written on his brow. With what assiduity did Cæsar labor at the erection of a royal throne! The power of royalty was already attained by him, chiefly through his accepting the perpetual dictatorship. There was lacking only the title to crown the labors of his life. But he was compelled to atone with his life for this concealed design.

And yet his murderers were mistaken who performed the justifiable deed under the guidance of Brutus, if they believed; that by the murder of the tyrant they had crushed tyranny and restored life to the free government. Civil wars broke out afresh with unrestrained fury. But when the most daring republicans had fallen in the fierce contests or by proscription, and the multitude longed for rest, it was possible for the crafty victor at Actium, Octavianus, to establish his imperial power, though invested with republican forms.

But the Roman republic had been borne to its tomb—with no hope of a resurrection!

